SPAWN

THE DARK AGES

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18

DIGITAL EDITION

TODD McFARLANE AND IMAGE COMICS PRESENT

18 | CRUCIFIED

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SPAWN THE DARK AGES 17 SUMMARY

Covenant awakens as a man, not realizing that the dark powers that chose him as a Hellspawn will not let him break his contract with them so easily. While Gareth makes his way through the forest with the stolen Necroplasm, Covenant is driven to return to Rhyll. On the way, he encounters a band of thieves who beat the Hellspawn nearly to death. The pain and agony he suffers are a torturous new experience for the Hellspawn. Still, he pushes on to the town of Rhyll. There, he is greeted by young Alek – one of the few survivors of the destruction of the city.

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Rhyll
This should burn nicely, don't you think little one?
Bluurbblee.
Eh? Who's that then?
Wha?
God no...

North.

Though the morning sun peers through the thick forest, it supplies little light for the Druid Priest as he makes his way weakly through the foliage.

He has traveled for days without rest. He is tired, hungry and delirious with impossible questions that rack his exhausted mind.

Can evil be contained? Can it be held captive, a prisoner in a cage like a rotting hostage?

Most, even the wisest in the land, would say it is impossible to contain evil. That evil is not something that can be touched or smelled or tasted.

But for this Druid Priest, one of the last to survive the Roman slaughter, it is this impossibility that he will dedicate his life to performing.

Within the cage, the very essence of Hell, Malebolgia's urine...pure evil, the liquid depravity known as Necroplasm.

Using techniques known only to the Druids, the Necroplasm was ripped from the very body of a Hellspawn.

Who's there? Show yourself.
If he makes it, the Druid will hold the evil in his Northern hideaway. For this he will not be alone.
I received word of your arrival.
I am here at your disposal. I will serve you as you have served us.
Is the shelter prepared?
It is.
Take me there.
What do they call you, Iceni?
I am called Makus.

Here.
It is perfect.
The Druid and the Iceni, two dying breeds, will guard the evil with their lives, for now that he has taken the evil he has made them target.
But they will be ready.
Gareth has survived massacres by invading armies. He has witnessed cruelty beyond the imagination; humiliation, torture, rape and murder.
He does not fear the new gods who have chosen the earth as their battle ground.
No, the Druid knows they will come and maybe, just maybe, they will learn that their selfish arrogance has not gone unnoticed by the old religions. That they too have a stake in the planet.
The vigil has begun. The line has been drawn in the sand.
Let them come. Whether from your so-called Heaven or your simplistic Hell, I will be ready.

Finally...
After all these years.
After all the heartache.
After all the suffering, death and devastation.
Finally...
Wha?
...the nightmare is over.
No...

And another nightmare begins.
CRUCIFIED
Release me. I did not do this crime.
Curse the devil! Burn him!
Burn the murderer! Burn the liar!

In the time passed since the last full moon, Covenant, now a Hellspawn, gained and lost the trust of the people he ruled and defended.

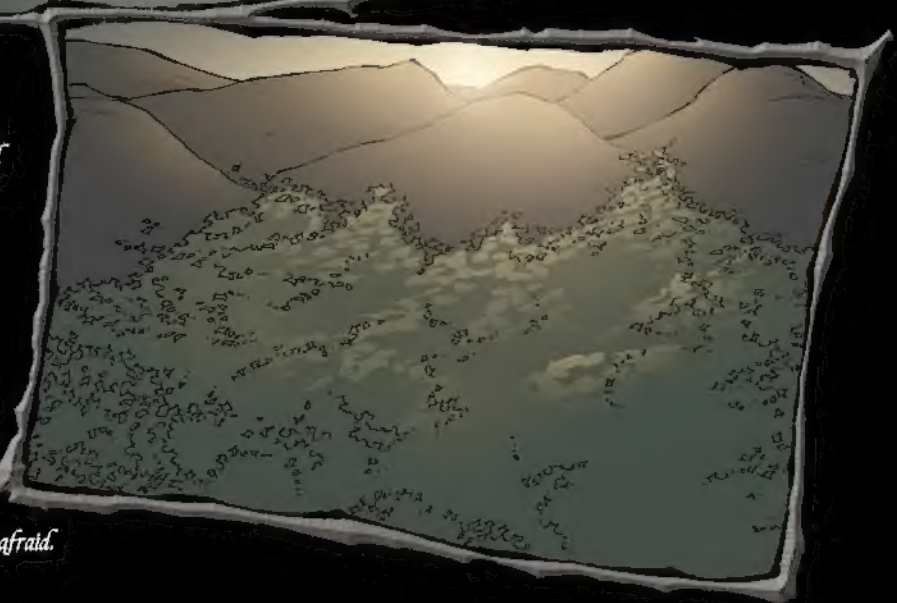
A mysterious cloud of doubt enshrouded Rhyll. A slaughter ensued. The Hellspawn was blamed.

Now, stripped of his Hellborn powers, Spawn returned to Rhyll in search of forgiveness.

What he found waiting instead was hate, absolute and raging.

They believe him a killer. In this they are correct, but not for the deaths of the innocents of Rhyll.

He was their hope. He was their protection. Now, the Hellspawn is the focus of their rage, the heart of their hopelessness.



For those deaths even the Hellspawn is in the dark. Whoever slaughtered the villagers is still out there waiting, and watching.

But for the crime, the Hellspawn will burn.

Stripped of the power that made him invulnerable, Covenant waits for the flame to be lit. He knows he will burn, and he knows that he will feel pain, and for the first time in his Hellborn existence...

The Hellspawn is afraid.

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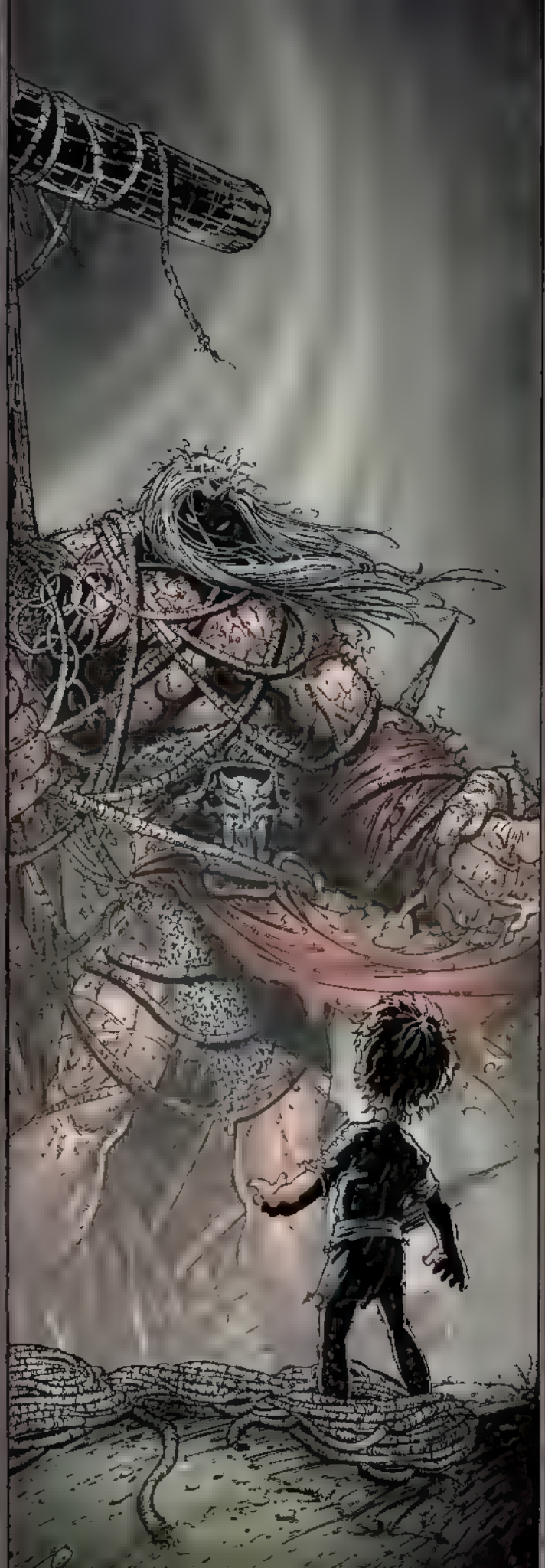
Oh god! It's horrible!
Something is amiss here in these woods.
It was the master using his trickery! I tell you he is the devil himself!
Quiet, old man. I think we've had enough madness for a day
These wounds are still fresh See there the way they bleed.
Perhaps it was not the master who did the killings after all, Fergus.
Aye. I think that we have made a terrible mistake.
What do you mean? Who else but the master could possibly kill so many in so short a time
I have heard tales of other deaths in the wood that could not be explained. What I am saying is that as far as this one is concerned, it could not have been the master because he has been bound since he arrived.
What's all this nonsense! Come out with it!
What I am saying is that something else is in these woods. Something other than the master Something dark. Something evil.
There is a Beast in these woods.

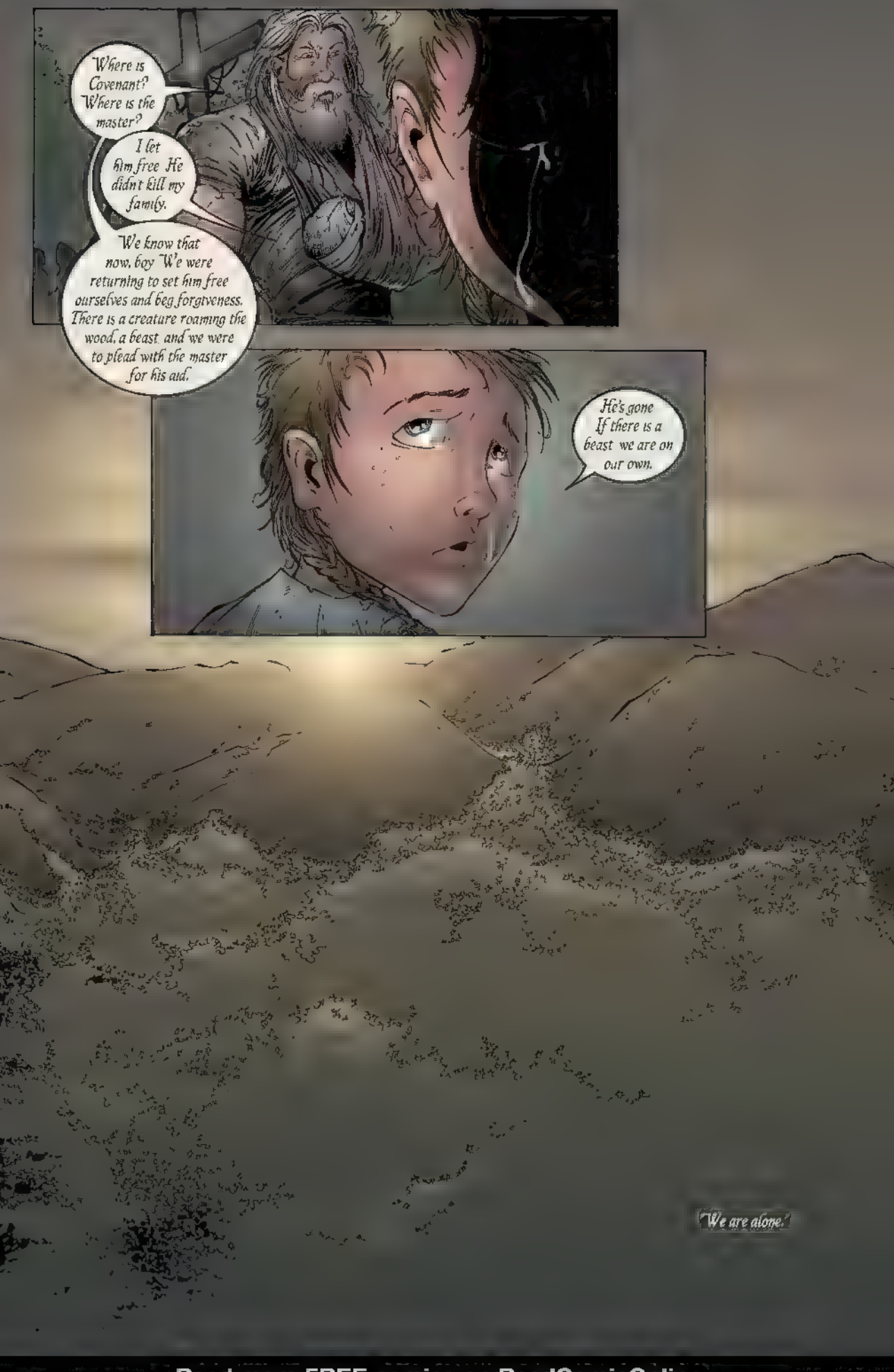
Why don't you break the ropes and escape?
I cannot. I am weak.
The fear that had consumed the Hellspawn's heart subsides as the little boy, so young yet so wise, steps up to aid him in his hour of need.
Though selfishly thinking of his own freedom, his own life being spared, the Hellspawn cannot help but wonder how a boy has survived as he has.
In these dark times, the boy has seen death as often as the sunrise and witnessed inhumanity that would bring a grown man to his knees.
And still there is room in this child's heart to see through the monstrous appearance of the Hellspawn, and for that Spawn is both thankful and amazed.

But he should not be surprised, the Hellspawn muses. In the hundreds of years that he has lived, as Hellspawn and man, there is one thing that he has learned...

...sometimes, hope comes in very small packages.



I thank you, little one I owe you my life.
My family is dead, and spirits haunt these woods. I am afraid when you are not here Take me with you.
If only it were so simple.
I can not take you with me. I do not know where I am going.
As for these things that haunt the wood. You are strong and brave When you are afraid remember this and the fear will subside.
The villagers are returning. I must go, little one.
My name is Alek.
Very well, Alek. I promise you that I will return.
I'll be here. I've nowhere to go.


Where is Covenant? Where is the master?
I let him free. He didn't kill my family.
We know that now, boy. We were returning to set him free ourselves and beg forgiveness. There is a creature roaming the wood, a beast, and we were to plead with the master for his aid.
He's gone. If there is a beast we are on our own.
We are alone.

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As with all things, the Hellspawn finds himself bound to cycles.
In life he was bound by cycles of love, death, honor and war, but in the end he comes full circle and returns to the point where it began.
In death he is bound by the same.
He is drawn to the origin of his death-cycle, to the man who claimed to have been a Hellspawn.
And so, with no place else to go, the Hellspawn must return to the beginning.

To the man who claimed to have the answers.
Back to Cagliostro.
I said you would return.
You are as stubborn as I at your age Hellspawn and...
Are you ready to abandon your foolish ideas of crusades and heroism and work with me toward ending this scourge once and for all?
I am.
My God! What has happened to you!

Your eyes! Your Body! and What's this?!
Blood?
Red Blood!
The red blood of a man! How can this be
I was attacked... ambushed within a stone circle of the Druids... they took my power.

what are you doing?
Have you nothing to say?
I do not deal with common men, lad. I am here to guide the cursed and only the cursed.
You're going to leave?!
I am not a teacher of men. I live to guide the Hellspawn away from the War. You are of no interest to me any longer.
No longer of interest?!
That is what I said. Are you deaf as well as dull-witted?

If the Necroplasm is no longer in you, then Malebolgia is setting about searching for another dark soul to take. I will be there. You are no longer ..
Arrogant gnat.
..a part of the greater plan, and because of this...
Oof! Arrgh!
You claim to want to help me, but it was all a lie. A lie!
Again you have weighed the balance of your choices unwisely, Covenant.
I am neither Covenant nor Hellspawn. I am nothing! I am a living void!
And that, as they say, is your dilemma.

I'd like to tell you something I've meant to speak for a long time now.
Say it now, Cogliostro, before I rip the life out of you.
Hear this, Covenant...
...if we ever meet again in this world...
...try not to whine so much!

Goodbye. I wish you better luck in this life than you had in your death.
D...don't... Don't leave me.
I am on a quest. I can not lose focus. Not for you or any man.
I am sorry.
I have always hated you Cogliostro. I always sensed you lived to serve only one... yourself.
That is for you to believe.
You are on your own, Covenant.

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It ends where it began with no more light shed into the darkness than the day he was spat from the stinking bile of Hell.
The endless cycle... birth... life... death and Hell.
And death again.
Where in this dark world is there a place for a man that is neither living nor dead?
Where in this lonely world is a home for a creature who has been abandoned by Heaven and by Hell in a single killing blow?
There are no answers.
Now the Hellspawn waits, feeling the blood draining from his battered body, feeling a pain that he has never felt, and all he can think is a single word and all of the terrible implications it holds.
Lost.

DARKNESS